

Module IX

Operations Assessment

OBJECTIVES

1. Define Operations Assessment, including the purpose, means of accomplishment, approach, and outcomes. (1.c,d)
2. Identify the key elements of assessments, surveillance, and audits, and their application. (1.c)
3. Describe the self-assessment process, and discuss how it relates to formal internal and external contractor assessments. (1.d)
4. Describe Stop Work Authority and its application. (1.k)

- I. **Operations Assessment:** emphasizes observation of ongoing facility activities as the primary starting point for assessment. Document reviews and interviews are used as appropriate to confirm observation results or where they may assist in determining the causes of an apparent deficiency.

A. Three types of Assessment Activities:

1. **Assessment** - a documented activity performed in accordance with written procedures to evaluate the performance or implementation effectiveness of a program, and to determine whether activities and related results are suitable to achieve performance objectives. (Typically, broader in scope and detail/depth of review when compared against an audit).
2. **Audit** - a documented activity performed (not necessarily with written procedures) to verify, by examination and evaluation of objective evidence, that applicable elements of the system are suitable and have been developed, documented, and effectively implemented in accordance with specified requirements.

3. **Surveillance** - the continuous monitoring and verification of the status of procedures, methods, conditions, products, processes, and services, and, the analysis of records in relation to stated references to ensure that requirements are being met.

B. Assessment Process:

1. **Planning:** Research and planning prior to each assessment activity provides for the most effective use of limited time and resources. The planning phase involves two steps; a pre-assessment information review and the development of an assessment plan.

2. **Observations, Interviews, and Document Reviews:**

- Observing activities as they are performed, provides information directly related to the effectiveness of operations.

Observation "Do's":

- Explain your role to personnel being observed;
- Develop a rapport and put them at ease;
- Active listening/observation (apprentice mind-set);
- Take good notes;
- Look for ways to improve performance (but don't offer solutions); and,
- Ask clarifying questions.

Observation “Don’ts”:

- Don’t assume -- make every effort to fully understand what you saw; and,
- Don’t interfere.

- Interviews with facility operations personnel are an effective method of determining the level of knowledge and familiarity with facility policies and procedures.

Interviewing “Do’s”:

- Plan questions in advance;
- Ask questions clearly and concisely;
- Allow interviewee time to think through response;
- Keep interview on track;
- Listen carefully and take good notes; and,
- Paraphrase at conclusion.

Interviewing “Don’ts”:

- Ask leading questions;
- Talk too much or interrupt;
- Write too much;
- Communicate desire response; and,
- Manage time poorly.

- Document reviews are conducted prior to and during an assessment for three basic reasons:
 - to gain familiarity with the requirements contained in facility policies, procedures, etc.;
 - to validate or disprove apparent deviations from requirements and identify programmatic breakdowns or widespread problems; and,

- to investigate apparent inconsistencies between facility policies and procedures and DOE Orders.

3. **Lead Validation (“Pulling the String”):** The process of following up on leads using additional observations, interviews, and document reviews. A lead is considered a deviation from expectations or an apparent deviation from requirements that is obtained as a result of observations, interviews, or document review. The process should continue until all leads have been validated, programmatic breakdowns or widespread problems are identified, or sufficient evidence exists to disprove the apparent deviation.

4. **Determination and Reporting of Deficiencies:** The end product of the assessment process is the identification and reporting of deficiencies. The assessment report provides facility management with an indication of areas needing improvement.

II. **Self-Assessment Process:** The same basic process for assessing the contractor or another organization is used for performing self-assessments except that the focus is inward for the purpose of self-improvement.

A. Some principles involved with performing independent self assessments include:

1. A process of planned and periodic independent assessments should be established and implemented by an independent assessment organization. Independent assessments should focus on improving items and processes by emphasizing line organization's achievement of quality in operations.

2. Personnel performing independent assessments should act in a management advisory function. Their responsibilities are to monitor work performance, identify abnormal performance and precursors of potential problems, identify opportunities for improvement, report results to a level of management having the authority to effect corrective action, and verify satisfactory resolution of problems.
3. Personnel performing independent assessments should be technically knowledgeable and they should focus on improving the quality of the processes that lead to the end product.
4. Personnel performing independent assessments should not have direct responsibilities in the area they are assessing.
5. Independent assessments should be conducted using criteria that describe acceptable work performance and promote improvement.
6. Scheduling of assessments and allocation of resources should be based on the status, risk, and complexity of the item or process being assessed. Scheduling should be flexible and additional attention should be given to areas of questionable performance.
7. Assessment results should be tracked and resolved by management having responsibility in the area assessed. Follow up review of deficient areas should be initiated as necessary.

8. Responses to self-assessments should include the following, as applicable: action to correct the deficiency; cause identification; actions to prevent recurrence; lessons learned; and actions to be taken for improvement.

III. **Stop Work Authority:** In the event that an unsafe situation arises in which operators fail to recognize a potential safety concern, the individual or group that identifies the situation has the responsibility of warning the operators. The operators should then proceed to correct the situation. If the operators do not take action to mitigate or eliminate the hazard, the individual or group should contact the work supervisor to have the problem corrected. If the situation requires immediate action to prevent personal injury, the individual or group should take action to eliminate or mitigate the hazard by directing the operators to stop work, or by initiating emergency response actions or other actions. In addition, the individual or group that identifies the hazard should ensure that appropriate DOE and contractor management are notified.

References and Suggested Reading

DOE 5480.19 Conduct of Operations Requirements for DOE Facilities

DOE O 430.1 Life Cycle Asset Management

DOE 5700.6C Quality Assurance

DOE-EM-STD-5505-96 Operations Assessment